

HEAVENLY CREATIONS

BY
STJEPAN
ŠEJIĆ

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BOOK TWO

STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ
STORY AND ART

GABRIELA DOWNIE
LETTERS

STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ
COVER AND VARIANT COVER

HARLEY QUINN CREATED BY
PAUL DINI AND **BRUCE TIMM**



IT STARTS WITH **FANTASIES**, DOCTOR-- THAT WISHFUL THINKING THAT MAKES YOUR MUSCLES **TWITCH** AS YOU IMAGINE WRAPPING YOUR HANDS AROUND YOUR ENEMY'S **NECK**.

I DON'T HAVE ENEMIES, MR. **JAY**.

SURE YOU DO! EVERYONE DOES! THOSE PEOPLE YOU MEET AND THINK, **WOULDN'T THINGS BE SO MUCH BETTER IF THEY WERE DEAD?**

THOSE PEOPLE WHOSE VERY PRESENCE TURNS THINGS SOUR.

WE ALL KNOW THEM. AND IT STARTS WITH THEM. THEY ARE THE FIRST ONES TO **TEST** YOU.

WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH **GOTHAM CITY?**







SO ALL THE GOOD PEOPLE
ARE JUST **MONSTERS**
IN HIDING?

UNTIL THE
RUBBER BANDS OF
THEIR MASKS
SNAP.

I
MEAN...

ALL THE **NORMAL**
PEOPLE DREAM OF GOING
CRAZY EVERY NOW AND
THEN...PROBLEM IS, WHEN
THEY DO, THERE'S **NO**
GOING BACK.

AND WHAT
DO **YOU** DREAM
OF?

OH...SIMPLE
STUFF...HONEST
SMILES...

ANYHOW, I'M
A BIT TIRED, MAYBE
WE CAN CONTINUE
THIS LATER.

SURE, MR.
JAY...SEE YOU
SOON.

YOU
KNOW WHERE
TO FIND ME.

I'D DWELL ON THE SMALL DETAILS
OF WHAT HE'D SAID, WONDERING IF
THEY CARRIED LARGER MEANINGS...

BUT NOT THAT DAY.

THAT DAY I
WAS **PISSED.**

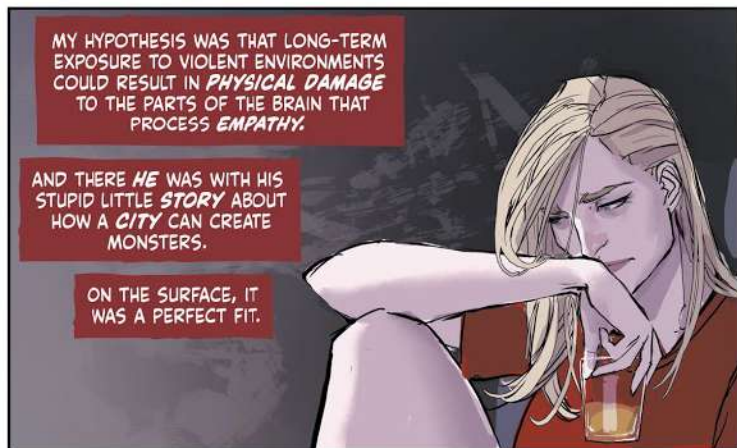
IT FELT LIKE SOME SAD RETELLING OF
THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT,
WRAPPED IN ANECDOTAL NONSENSE--
THE SORT OF **GARBAGE** HE'D FED
HIS PREVIOUS THERAPISTS.

IT WAS DOWNRIGHT
OFFENSIVE.



IT WAS SO DAMNED
INFURIATING...

...BECAUSE I FELT SO
DAMNED CLOSE!



MY HYPOTHESIS WAS THAT LONG-TERM
EXPOSURE TO VIOLENT ENVIRONMENTS
COULD RESULT IN *PHYSICAL DAMAGE*
TO THE PARTS OF THE BRAIN THAT
PROCESS *EMPATHY*.

AND THERE *HE* WAS WITH HIS
STUPID LITTLE *STORY* ABOUT
HOW A *CITY* CAN CREATE
MONSTERS.

ON THE SURFACE, IT
WAS A PERFECT FIT.



ACCORDING TO HIM, MADNESS
IS OUR *DEFAULT STATE*. ALWAYS
THERE, BUBBLING UNDER THE
SURFACE.



BUT THEN AGAIN,
WHAT DID I EXPECT?

SIX PREVIOUS DOCTORS AGREED HE
WAS INCAPABLE OF *REAL FEELINGS*
OR OF ACKNOWLEDGING THE
HUMANITY OF OTHERS.

OF COURSE HE WOULD SEE
EVERYONE AS MONSTERS
WEARING MASKS.



A MONTH INTO MY WORK AT
ARKHAM ASYLUM AND I WAS
BACK TO SQUARE ONE. NOT EVEN
CLOSE TO FINDING A SINGLE
PROMISING CANDIDATE FOR MY
RESEARCH.

I NEEDED *SOMEONE* TO TELL
ME WHO THEY WERE *BEFORE*
THEY...WELL...SNAPPED.



BUT THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THESE
SO-CALLED "*SUPER-VILLAINS*":
THEY'RE MORE INTERESTED IN TELLING
YOU ABOUT WHO THEY ARE *NOW*.



CLICK

THIS IS **WGBS** NEWS AT ELEVEN WITH **JACK RYDER**.

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE. ON THIS SAD DAY, ALL OF GOTHAM IS **REELING** FROM TRAGIC EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE EARLIER AT GOTHAM SUPERIOR COURT.

WHAT STARTED AS A SIMPLE PRESS CONFERENCE BECAME THE STUFF OF **NIGHTMARES** WHEN AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE ON THE LIFE OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY **HARVEY DENT** BY ALLEGED CRIME BOSS **SALVATORE "SAL" MARONI**.

HERE IS **WGBS**'S FOOTAGE OF SAID EVENT. **BE WARNED:** EVEN THOUGH WE'RE NO STRANGERS TO **EXTREME VIOLENCE** HERE ON GOTHAM BROADCAST SYSTEM, THIS MAY BE TOO MUCH FOR SOME VIEWERS. DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

MR. DENT! **SUMMER GLEESON, WGBS**. DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?

I'LL MAKE ONE.

THE CITY'S BUILDING COMMISSION HAS CALLED FOR AN INQUIRY INTO THE BUSINESS DEALINGS OF **SALVATORE MARONI**.

IS YOUR OFFICE A PART OF THE INVESTIGATIVE EFFORT?

YES AND NO.

MY OFFICE IS BUILDING OUR **OWN** CASE AGAINST MR. MARONI FOR CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES THAT EXTEND **FAR BEYOND** RIGGING CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT BIDDING.

SUCH AS?

THAT I'M NOT ABLE TO DISCLOSE RIGHT NOW...

BUT I CAN TELL YOU THIS: **SAL MARONI** IS AN **IMPORTANT** MAN. IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR **THE POLICE** TO DELIVER HIS **COFFEE**, IT SEEMS...



BUT THIS
IS ABOUT TO
CHANGE.



MARONI.

BE CAREFUL
OF PROMISING **TOO**
MUCH THERE,
DENT!



SEE, ME? I'M A **BUSINESSMAN**.
I SELL A PRODUCT PEOPLE
WANT. BUT YOU?

YOU'RE A
POLITICIAN **PRETENDING**
TO BE THE LAW. YOU TOO
ARE HERE TO SELL A
PRODUCT, AREN'T
YOU?

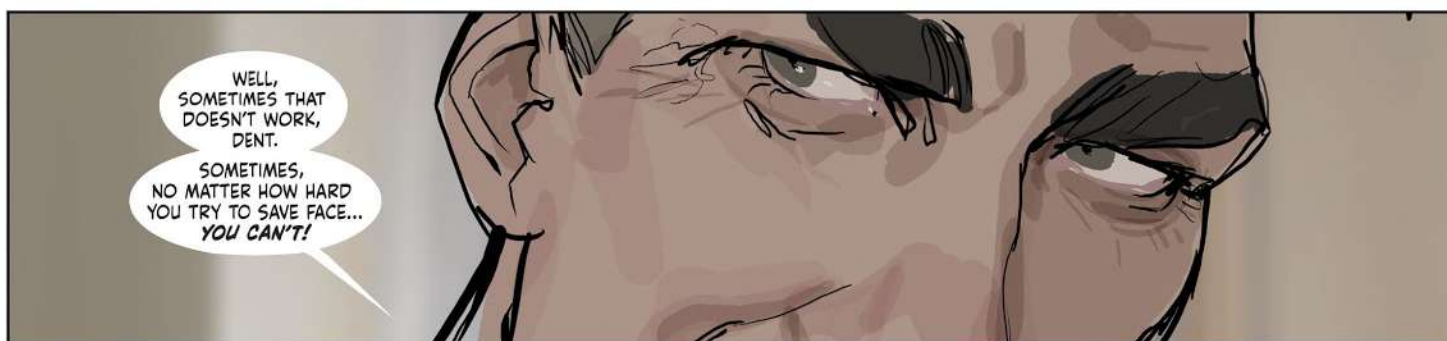


YOUR PRODUCT
IS THIS WHOLE **PIOUS ACT**
OF YOURS, THIS **ILLUSION**
THAT YOU GOT THINGS
UNDER **CONTROL**. BUT
YOU DON'T!



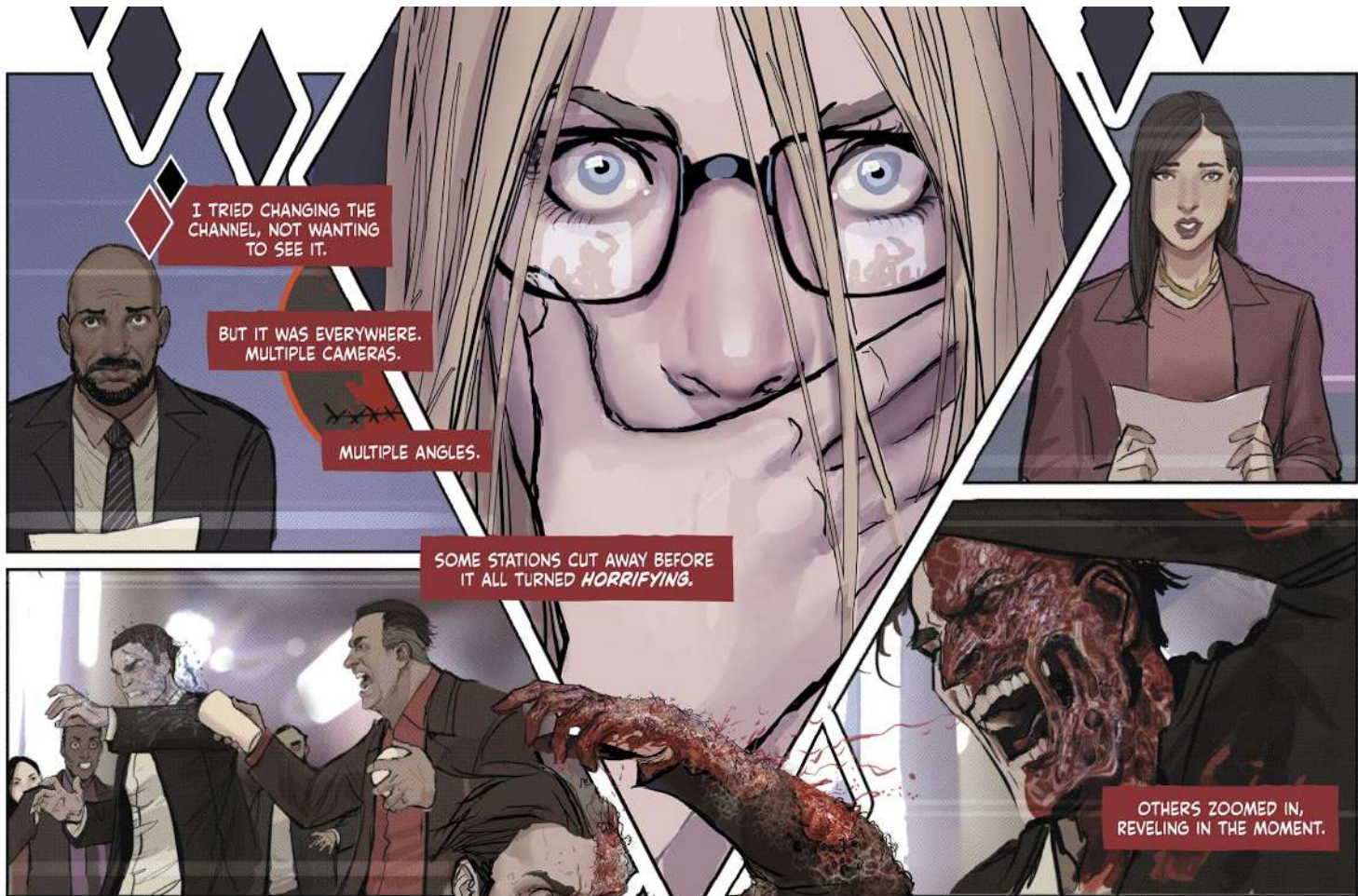
IN THE END, LIKE EVERY OTHER
POLITICIAN, YOU ARE NOTHING
BUT **BROKEN PROMISES** IN
AN EXPENSIVE SUIT.

AND WHEN PEOPLE
STOP BUYING WHAT YOU'RE
SELLING, YOU THROW **HONEST**
MEN LIKE ME UNDER THE BUS...
NO MATTER **WHO**
GETS HURT.



WELL,
SOMETIMES THAT
DOESN'T WORK,
DENT.

SOMETIMES,
NO MATTER HOW HARD
YOU TRY TO SAVE FACE...
YOU CAN'T!



I TRIED CHANGING THE CHANNEL, NOT WANTING TO SEE IT.

BUT IT WAS EVERYWHERE. MULTIPLE CAMERAS.

MULTIPLE ANGLES.

SOME STATIONS CUT AWAY BEFORE IT ALL TURNED HORRIFYING.

OTHERS ZOOMED IN, REVEALING IN THE MOMENT.



NOW DIE
YOU TWO-FACED
SON OF A
BITCH!
THIS
IS FOR MY
BOY!

AND AS I WATCHED IT HAPPENING, A SICKENING THOUGHT TORMENTED ME. I'D WANTED TO HURT HIM MYSELF, JUST THAT VERY MORNING...

DR. MATHEWS WAS RIGHT. IT WAS EVERYWHERE, AND I COULDN'T STOP WATCHING. AND THE ATTACK ON DENT WAS ONLY THE **START...**

DOCTORS CONFIRM THE CHEMICAL USED WAS NOT A TYPICAL HYDROCHLORIC ACID, BUT A CURIOUS **MIX** MOST LIKELY ORIGINATING FROM **AXIS CHEMICAL** FACILITIES.

BECAUSE OF THE UNIQUELY DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF THIS SUBSTANCE, DISTRICT ATTORNEY DENT HAS BEEN PLACED IN A **MEDICALLY INDUCED COMA**.

SALVATORE MARONI WAS TAKEN INTO POLICE CUSTODY, WHICH IN ANY OTHER CITY WOULD SERVE AS EPILOGUE TO THIS SAD STORY.

BUT THIS IS **GOTHAM**, AFTER ALL, AND HERE THINGS HAVE A WAY OF ESCALATING.

JUST ONE HOUR AFTER MARONI'S ARREST, WE RECEIVED NEWS THAT HIS POLICE TRANSPORT VEHICLE HAD BEEN **COMMANDEERED** BY UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS.

LATER, THIS VIDEO WAS DELIVERED **ANONYMOUSLY** TO THE WGBS STUDIO.

ONCE AGAIN, **VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED**.

CITIZENS OF GOTHAM: FOR YEARS WE OF **THE GOTHAM CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT** HAVE SERVED, PROTECTED, AND **BLED** FOR THIS CITY ONLY TO SEE OUR SACRIFICES **MOCKED** BY THE SAME CRIMINALS RETURNING TO OUR STREETS AGAIN AND AGAIN--ALL TOO OFTEN THANKS TO THE LEGAL MEDDLING OF BLEEDING-HEART **FOOLS**.

TODAY, AFTER THE ATTACK ON DISTRICT ATTORNEY DENT, WE ARE **DONE** BEING MOCKED.

OVER AND OVER, THE MERCY OF OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM HAS ILL SERVED YOU ALL.

CRIMINALS DON'T FEAR THE HAND OF JUSTICE BECAUSE JUSTICE LACKS THE MECHANISM TO TRULY **PUNISH** THEM.

WELL, FROM NOW ON, WE WILL BE THAT MECHANISM. **WE** WILL BE THAT HAND.

CRIMINALS OF GOTHAM, YOU'VE MET YOUR JUDGES AND YOUR JURIES. NOW, MEET YOUR **EXECUTIONERS**.

WE WILL START WITH SAL HERE. THIS IS YOUR BIG MOMENT, SAL! ANY LAST WORDS?

FUCK YOU!

THEY PIXELATED THE MOMENT OF THE SHOT, BUT THE **SOUND** REMAINED...



STILL, CONTRARY TO THEIR OWN PROMISES, IT WOULD SEEM THE EXECUTIONERS' REIGN OF TERROR WILL BE SHORT-LIVED--THANKS TO BATMAN.



BECAUSE TO OUR GREAT SURPRISE, THE TAPE DOESN'T END WITH THE MURDER OF MR. MARONI...



THE CAMERA KEPT ROLLING, CAPTURING THE GRAND ENTRANCE OF GOTHAM'S OWN DARK KNIGHTS AND HIS SWIFT INCARCERATION OF THE PERPETRATORS.

ARGH!

THUNK



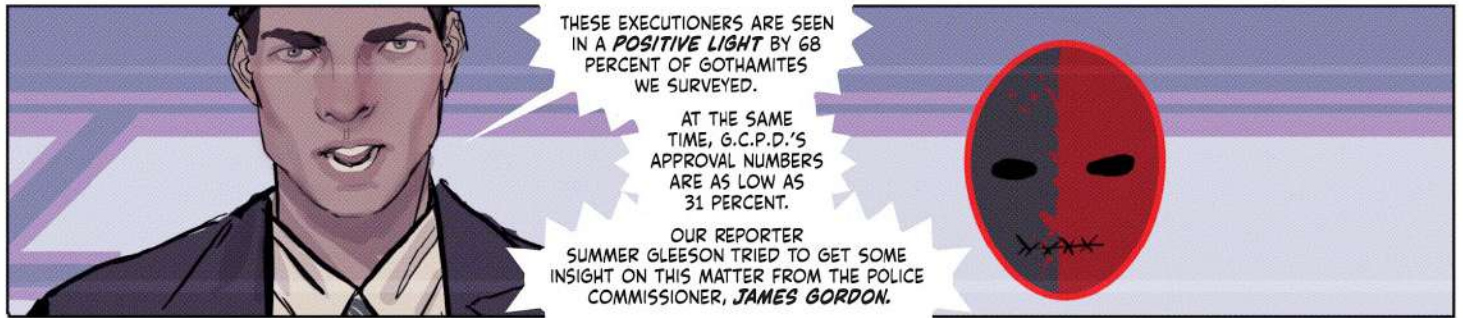
UNFORTUNATELY, THE FOOTAGE ENDS WHEN THE CAMERA IS KNOCKED OVER.

BUT THERE YOU HAVE IT--VIGILANTE VERSUS VIGILANTE.

IT'S THE BAT! SHOOT--

ARGH!

THUNK



THESE EXECUTIONERS ARE SEEN IN A **POSITIVE LIGHT** BY 68 PERCENT OF GOTHAMITES WE SURVEYED.

AT THE SAME TIME, G.C.P.D.'S APPROVAL NUMBERS ARE AS LOW AS 31 PERCENT.

OUR REPORTER SUMMER GLEESON TRIED TO GET SOME INSIGHT ON THIS MATTER FROM THE POLICE COMMISSIONER, **JAMES GORDON**.



GOTHAM P.D. HAS BEEN COOPERATING WITH A VIGILANTE FOR **YEARS**. HOW ARE THESE ROGUE OFFICERS ANY DIFFERENT?



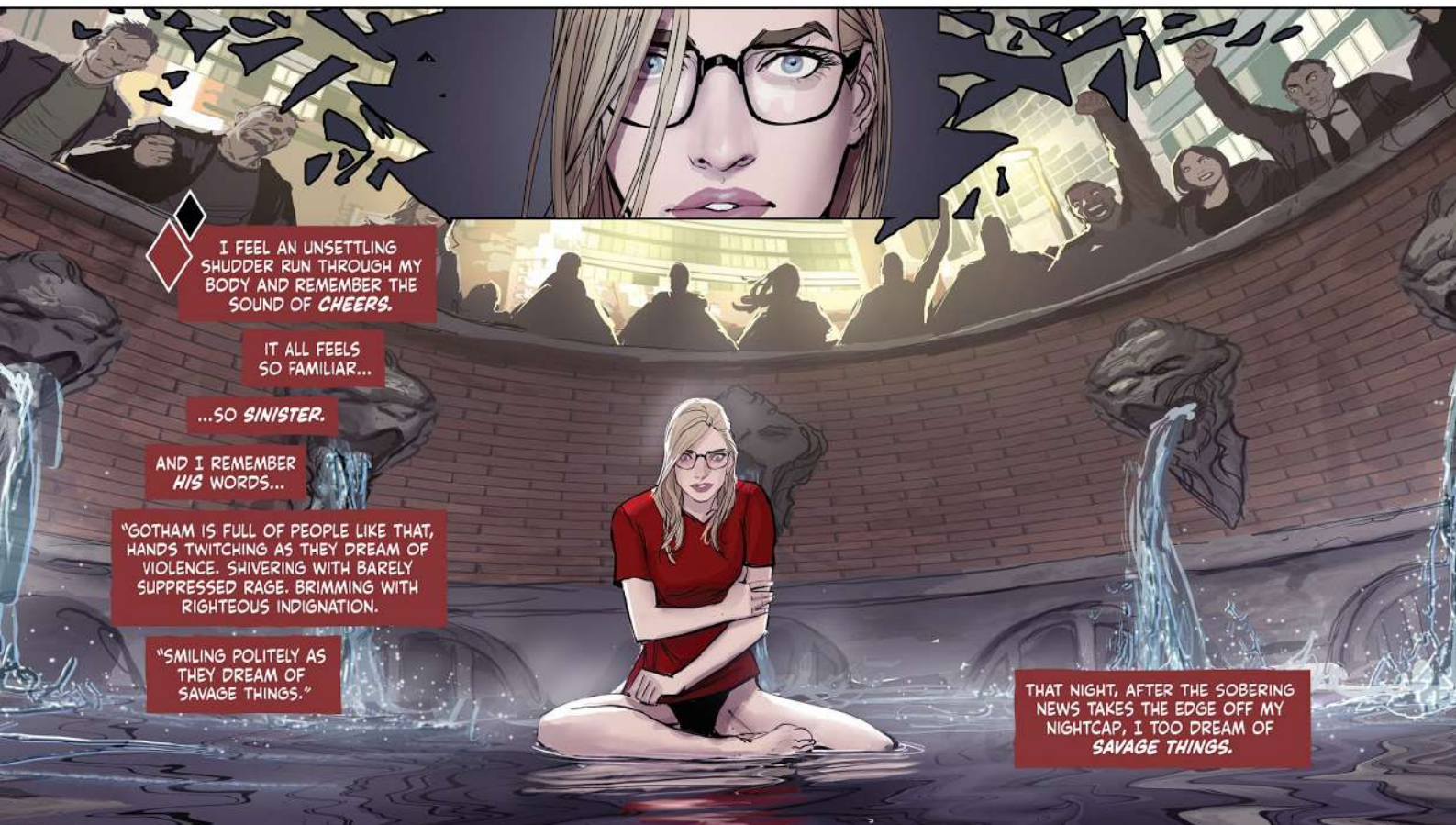
HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT FROM **BATMAN**?



BATMAN IS NOT A **MURDERER**.

BUT COMMISSIONER--

NO MORE QUESTIONS!



I FEEL AN UNSETTLING SHUDDER RUN THROUGH MY BODY AND REMEMBER THE SOUND OF **CHEERS**.

IT ALL FEELS SO FAMILIAR...

...SO **SINISTER**.

AND I REMEMBER **HIS** WORDS...

"GOTHAM IS FULL OF PEOPLE LIKE THAT, HANDS TWITCHING AS THEY DREAM OF VIOLENCE. SHIVERING WITH BARELY SUPPRESSED RAGE. BRIMMING WITH RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION.

"SMILING POLITELY AS THEY DREAM OF SAVAGE THINGS."

THAT NIGHT, AFTER THE SOBERING NEWS TAKES THE EDGE OFF MY NIGHTCAP, I TOO DREAM OF **SAVAGE THINGS**.



A PART OF ME WANTED TO TAKE DR. MATHEWS'S ADVICE AND FORGET MY INTERVIEWS WITH THE GOTHAM POLICE.

AND WHO KNOWS? IF MY ARKHAM INTERVIEWS HAD OFFERED *ANY* HOPE OF SUCCESS I MIGHT HAVE DONE JUST THAT.



BUT AS *HOPE* WASN'T A WORD I COULD USE FOR MY PROGRESS AT ARKHAM, I FELT THE COPS WERE MY BEST CHANCE TO MOVE MY RESEARCH *FORWARD*.



ESPECIALLY WITH THIS WHOLE *EXECUTIONERS* SITUATION. IT WAS *HEAVEN-SENT* FOR MY THEORY.

COMMISSIONER GORDON WOULD PROBABLY HAVE DESCRIBED IT DIFFERENTLY...



SIR! THERE'S A *MISS QUEENCELL* HERE TO SEE YOU?
SHE SAYS SHE HAS AN APPOINTMENT.



OH SWEET GOD WILL THIS WEEK NEVER END.
YES...BRING *DR. QUINZEL* IN.
UM...SURE.



UH, BAD TIME?
EVERY TIME IS A BAD TIME.
SIT DOWN!



WOULD YOU LIKE A CUP OF COFFEE?
THANK YOU, NO. I'VE HAD A *DOZEN* ALREADY.



I'LL GET RIGHT
TO **THE POINT**: DR. MATHEWS
TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH,
AND WHILE I GENERALLY DON'T FIND IT
OBJECTIONABLE, I WOULD ASK YOU
TO RECONSIDER YOUR
TIMING.

COMMISSIONER,
I BELIEVE IT HAS
TO BE **NOW**.



THIS SITUATION WITH THE
EXECUTIONERS MIGHT BE THE
CATALYST NEEDED FOR AN HONEST
AND RELEVANT CONVERSATION
WITH YOUR OFFICERS.

HONEST CONVERSATION?



DOCTOR, MY
ENTIRE POLICE
FORCE IS UNDER
SUSPICION!

EVERY SHOT
FIRED IN THE LINE OF
DUTY WILL BE STUDIED UNDER
A MICROSCOPE BECAUSE OF
THESE EXECUTIONER IDIOTS!



I...I DIDN'T
KNOW...

LISTEN, EVERYONE
HERE IS ON EDGE RIGHT
NOW--INCLUDING
ME.

BUT JUST
SO YOU KNOW I'M
ON THE LEVEL WITH YOU,
I'LL SHOW YOU
SOMETHING.
COME ON.



BY THE WAY, IF
ANYONE ASKS, YOU'RE A
UNION-SPONSORED THERAPIST
HERE TO LOOK AFTER THE
OFFICERS.

WHY NOT
JUST TELL THE TRUTH?
I'M HERE DOING
RESEARCH.



DR. QUINZEL, THESE
ARE STRANGE TIMES FULL OF
STRANGER CRIMINALS. THE LAST
PSYCHIATRIST TO DO RESEARCH
HERE WAS **JONATHAN CRANE**
AND...WELL LET'S JUST SAY
THAT DIDN'T END
WELL.

UH...RIGHT.
FAIR ENOUGH.

AND
THAT WAS
BEFORE THIS WHOLE
"EXECUTIONERS"
BUSINESS.



HERE WE ARE.
BEING FROM THE CRIMINAL
PSYCHOLOGY CENTER, I TRUST
YOU CAN KEEP WHAT YOU
SEE HERE TO **YOUR-
SELF**.

OF COURSE!





I'M SORRY,
IF THIS IS TOO MUCH
FOR YOU--

IT'S FINE.
WE'S NOT
MY FIRST MURDERER
RANTING BEHIND SOME
GLASS.



SO YOU SEE MY
PROBLEM.

I GOT THREE
HERO COPS UNDER ARREST
AND NOBODY KNOWS HOW
MANY MORE WITHIN OUR
RANKS ARE WAITING TO
SNAP.

EVERYBODY
SUSPECTS **EVERYBODY**
RIGHT NOW.



WE HAVE
LAWS FOR THAT,
HOSKINS.

LAWS...



SO TRUST ME
WHEN I TELL YOU, YOU
WILL **NOT** FIND ANYONE
WILLING TO SHARE THEIR
PERSONAL FAILINGS WITH
A PSYCHIATRIST
TODAY.



YEAH...



PEOPLE DIE BECAUSE WE
RELEASE THESE BASTARDS
ON TECHNICALITIES
OR FOR "**GOOD
BEHAVIOR.**"

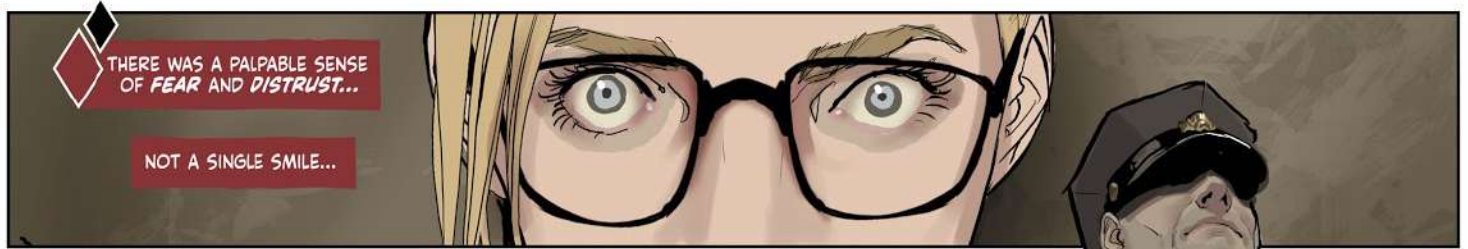
YOU CAN TAKE
YOUR **LAWS** AND
SHOVE THEM UP YOUR
CONDESCENDING
ASSES!

THIS CITY
NEEDS US BECAUSE
WE **WILL** DO WHAT THE
REST OF YOU
WON'T!

WHAT
EVEN BATMAN
REFUSES TO
DO!







THERE WAS A PALPABLE SENSE
OF *FEAR* AND *DISTRUST*...

NOT A SINGLE SMILE...



BECAUSE ALL OF
THEM KNEW IT...

...THE UNPLEASANT TRUTH THAT ANY
ONE OF THEIR COMRADES-IN-ARMS
COULD BE ONE OF *THEM*...

AN EXECUTIONER.

AND THE LONGER I WAITED,
THE HEAVIER THAT VERY IDEA
FELT...



DOCTOR!

BWAH!



COME
ON! HE'S
WAITING!



SO, UH...IS
THERE SOME KIND OF...
PROTOCOL TO MEETING
HIM?

HE'S THE
BATMAN, NOT THE
FUCKING QUEEN OF
ENGLAND.



JUST...BE *CAREFUL*
WITH YOUR
QUESTIONS.

THE MAN
DRESSES AS A
BAT AND FIGHTS
CRIME.

I DON'T
THINK HE'S OVERLY
INTERESTED IN BEING
PSYCHOANALYZED
IS WHAT I'M
SAYING.

A WAVE OF PANIC WASHES OVER ME AS I THINK, *WHAT IF HE RECOGNIZES ME?*

BEING THE DOCTOR OF THE MAN WHO HELD YOU AT GUNPOINT IS TROUBLESOME ENOUGH...

...NOT *TELLING ANYONE* ABOUT IT WHILE CONDUCTING A STUDY ON THAT SAME MAN IS A PROBLEM.

GORDON.
NEW
DETECTIVE?

NO. A SHRINK.
DR. HARLEEN
QUINZEL.

MAYBE, UNLIKE MR. JAY, BATMAN NEVER TOOK A GOOD LOOK AT MY FACE THAT NIGHT...

...I HOPE?

FROM
ARKHAM?

YES,
BUT HOW DID
YOU--

THE GOOD
DOCTOR HERE
WANTED TO ASK YOU
SOMETHING.
GO ON!

I'D WAITED FOR HOURS. NOW I WAS
FINALLY ASKING HIM THE QUESTION.

IT WAS A SIMPLE QUESTION, AND I NEEDED *HIS*
ANSWER. I NEEDED IT BECAUSE HE IS THE *CRUCIAL*
PIECE OF THE MASSIVE PUZZLE THAT IS GOTHAM.

DO YOU
THINK THEY CAN
BE HELPED?



IS...

IS THAT WHY YOU LET THEM *LIVE*? THE PENGUIN, KILLER CROC, MR. JA--THE JOKER?

BECAUSE...

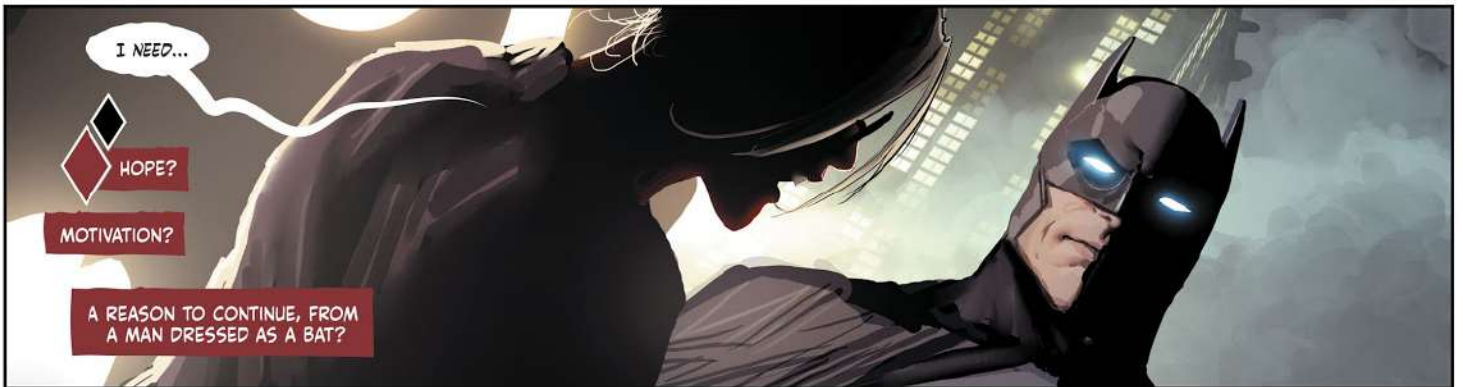
BECAUSE YOU THINK THERE'S *HOPE*?

I DON'T KILL.



YES, BUT I NEED TO KNOW *WHY*.

I NEED...



I NEED...

HOPE?

MOTIVATION?

A REASON TO CONTINUE, FROM A MAN DRESSED AS A BAT?



I NEED A REASON...

...TO GO ON.



I DON'T KILL BECAUSE AS HARD AS IT SOMETIMES IS, IT'S STILL THE RIGHT CHOICE.

I DON'T KILL BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP ON THEM...OR ON MYSELF.



...
SO YOU
BELIEVE THERE
IS **HOPE** FOR
THEM?

I **HOPE**
THERE IS.

EVEN
JOKER?

DO I
THINK **HE** CAN
BE HELPED?
MANY HAVE
TRIED.



I'M SORRY,
DOCTOR, I HAVE OTHER
BUSINESS HERE.



AS THEIR CONVERSATION DROWNED IN THE
SOUNDS OF THE CITY, I CONSIDERED ALL I
HAD SEEN AND HEARD THAT NIGHT AND FELT AN
IRRISISTIBLE DESIRE TO RETURN TO ARKHAM.

BECAUSE, IN ALL HONESTY,
AT THAT MOMENT...



...IT SEEMED LIKE A MORE
SANE PLACE TO BE.

ARKHAM ASYLUM

Three Days Later



YOU'RE LATE!

ROUGH NIGHT.

ANYHOW, I
THOUGHT YOU WERE THE
CHIEF OF SECURITY, NOT THE
HALL MONITOR, MR.
BRONSON!



MHM.

COFFEE MACHINE
IS OUT, BY THE WAY. I
HAD SIMMONS DO A COFFEE
RUN AND I INCLUDED YOU.
IT'S A BIT COLD BUT IT
SHOULD DO.



AW, THANKS.

YUP. THAT'LL
BE **TWO BUCKS** IN
THE COOKIE
JAR.



ALSO, DOC...
JUST DON'T **OVERDO**
IT, OKAY?



OVERDO WHAT?



I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SENSITIVE NOSE FOR BULLSHIT AND OTHER THINGS...
ONE OF THOSE THINGS BEING THE SMELL OF **ALCOHOL SWEAT**...



REMEMBER WHEN I TOLD YOU I COPE WITH THIS PLACE THROUGH WHISKEY AND DARTS?

YOU MAY WANT TO FIND YOUR **DARTS**, DOC.



HE WAS RIGHT. BUT MY DARTS WOULD HAVE TO WAIT.



I HAD THREE DAYS TO PUT MY THOUGHTS IN ORDER, TO PROCESS EVERYTHING.



THE POLICE STATION...MY INTERVIEW WITH MR. JAY.



MY OWN IMPATIENCE AND FRUSTRATION WITH IT ALL...



IT WASN'T LIKELY THAT HE'D JUST **TELL ME** ABOUT THE MOMENT HE SHED HIS OWN MASK AND HOWLED AT THE MOON WITH ALL THE OTHER MONSTERS.



SO I WOULD HAVE TO TAKE MY TIME.

I WOULD HAVE TO DO WHAT A PSYCHIATRIST DOES BEST.

LISTEN.

MR. JAY, I'M HERE TO CONTINUE OUR CONVERSATION.

AH, DR. **QUINN**...SOME-THING?

IS **QUINN** OKAY? YOUR NAME IS A BIT OF A TONGUE TWISTER.

EH, I'VE HEARD WORSE. IT'S FINE.



BY ALL
MEANS, SIT.

WHAT
WOULD YOU LIKE
TO KNOW?



WELL...I WOULD
LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
YOUR VIEW OF GOTHAM AS A CITY
OF MONSTERS. PARTICULARLY HOW
THIS RELATES TO THE *RULE
OF LAW*.

I WILL LET HIM TAKE ME ON A JOURNEY.
I WILL LET HIM WEAR HIMSELF OUT...I
WILL LET HIM *TALK*.



AND SO HE TALKS. SELF-IMPORTANT,
SELF-SATISFIED *NONSENSE* FROM A
NARCISSIST THINKING HIMSELF THE
SMARTEST MAN IN THE ROOM.

I GUESS IT HELPS WHEN
YOU'RE THE *ONLY* MAN
IN AN *EMPTY* ROOM.

TO THINK THAT I WOULD
SOON ADMIRE HIM...



SEE, IN THE
AGE OF METAHUMANS,
THE NOTION OF PEOPLE IMPOSING
LAW AND ORDER IS DOWNRIGHT
HILARIOUS. AND THEN YOU
HAVE THE *BATMAN*.



WHAT
ABOUT HIM?

WELL, THINK
ABOUT IT. DEEP DOWN, ALL
THE GOTHAM COPS KNOW THEY'RE
FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE. SOME
OF MY ROOMMATES HERE IN
ARKHAM PACK SO MUCH
POWER THEY COULD TAKE
ON AN *ARMY*.



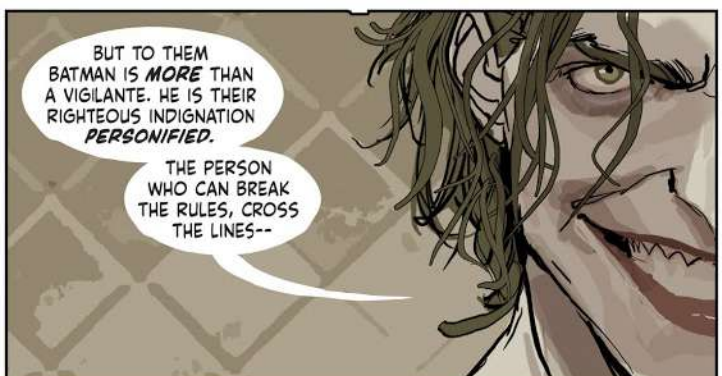
SO THE COPS *COMPROMISE*. THEY MOUNT
A CRY FOR HELP AT THE TOP OF POLICE
HEADQUARTERS. A SIGNAL FOR THEIR
AVATAR OF JUSTICE. OH THEY MAY
NOT SAY IT, BUT THEY DO SEE
HIM AS THAT.

A MAN WHO
DOES WHAT THEY WISH
THEY COULD: BUSTS IN,
BREAKS BONES, TAKES
DOWN THE *BAD
GUYS*...



THE POLICE
HAVE NEVER OFFICIALLY
CONDONED--

VIGILANTES,
YES, I KNOW,
DOCTOR.



BUT TO THEM
BATMAN IS *MORE* THAN
A VIGILANTE. HE IS THEIR
RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION
PERSONIFIED.

THE PERSON
WHO CAN BREAK
THE RULES, CROSS
THE LINES--



NOT
ALL THE
LINES.







SEE, THERE ARE TWO EXPRESSIONS I LOVE SEEING ON PEOPLE'S FACES ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE. **ABJECT HORROR** AND AN **HONEST SMILE**.



YOU'LL UNDERSTAND, THE TWO RARELY CROSS PATHS.



BUT...*THAT* NIGHT, WHEN I STARED AT YOUR FLAME-LIT FACE OF TERROR... I THOUGHT, I WOULDN'T MIND SEEING HER **SMILE**.



THEN AGAIN, MAYBE MY GUN WAS OUT OF BULLETS?

WHO KNOWS!

CRAZY PEOPLE, AMIRITE, DOCTOR?
HA HA HA HA HA!!



DR. QUINN...



NO JOKE... I'D LOVE TO SEE YOU SMILE ONE DAY.



IT WAS HIS TONE OF VOICE...

THE WAY HE *SAID IT*... AT HIS BREATH'S VERY END, AS IF TAKING A NEW BREATH WOULD GIVE HIM THE TIME TO RECONSIDER.

IT FELT...LIKE HE *MEANT IT*.



SO...HOW DID I
PROCESS ALL OF *THAT*?

I DECIDED TO RE-READ
A BOOK BY MR. JAY'S
PREVIOUS DOCTOR.

WHY? TO REMIND MYSELF
OF WHAT HE'S *ACTUALLY*
LIKE. I WAS FEELING A
LITTLE BLURRY ON THAT.



WHEN I WAS DONE READING I
DECIDED I WOULD SLEEP. NO
BOOZE, NO NOTHING.



AFTER ALL, I WAS FINE.

HE DIDN'T SCARE ME
AS MUCH ANYMORE.

IN FACT, I FOUND
HIM TIRESOME...

PRETENTIOUS...

"CITY OF MONSTERS," WHAT
BULLSHIT! I GOT SWEEPED UP
IN THE MOMENT, THAT'S ALL...

I JUST GOT A LITTLE
DISTRACTED BY HIS RANT...

AND THE THING
WITH THE SMILE...



NO JOKE...
I'D LOVE TO...



WHEN I FINALLY FALL
ASLEEP I DREAM OF
MYSELF WALKING.



AND I'M NOT ALONE.



THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE
GOING MY WAY.



REGULAR PEOPLE IN
A REGULAR CITY...



FINE NIGHT
FOR AN *EXECUTION*.
ISN'T IT, MISS?

I AGREE. I TOLD
MY HUSBAND TO HIRE
A BABYSITTER 'CAUSE I
HAD TO BE HERE
FOR THIS!





LATER I'D LEARN I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING.



SSSHHHHT



WELL WHAT DO YOU KNOW? MY PIZZA IS HERE!



LATE DELIVERY, AND I DO BELIEVE I ORDERED ANCHOVIES WITH THIS!

GIVE ME A BREAK. YOU KNOW **HOW HARD** THIS WAS TO GET OUT OF DR. STRANGE'S OFFICE?

WELL, B+ FOR EFFORT.

I WANT **DOUBLE** THE MONEY!



YOU TELL THAT TO MY ASSOCIATES WHEN YOU GO TO COLLECT.

I'M **SURE** THEY'LL TAKE IT WELL.



YOU SON OF A BITCH. I'LL--

WHAT?

EXACTLY!



YOU REALLY SHOULD SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR THAT **GAMBLING ADDICTION** OF YOURS, MR. ROBBINS.

I MEAN, YOU **ARE** IN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR THAT. THEY **CARE** HERE.



OH YES, THEY CARE A LOT...



FOUR DAYS PASSED AND THINGS GOT PROGRESSIVELY WORSE.

HIS WORDS ECHOED IN MY MIND, MAKING ME FEEL OVERLY CONSCIOUS OF EVERY SMILE I MADE.

HERE YOU GO, MISS.

THANK YOU.

I SPENT MOST OF MY FREE TIME WATCHING THE NEWS. *NOTHING* TO SMILE ABOUT THERE.

...GOTHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT IS TORN APART FROM WITHIN AS ALL EFFORTS ARE FOCUSED ON IDENTIFYING THE REMAINING EXECUTIONERS ON THE FORCE.

IN RELATED NEWS, BODIES OF SIX GANG MEMBERS WERE FOUND...

ON THE FIFTH DAY, MY MIND TURNED *SADISTIC*.

A GOOD HAIR MOMENT SPARKED A SECOND OF UNRESTRAINED VANITY. I SMILED TO THE MIRROR AND A THOUGHT FORMED FASTER THAN I COULD STOP IT.

LIKE A BIT OF GALLOWS HUMOR THAT HITS YOU DURING A FUNERAL, IT CAME...UNWANTED, YET RELENTLESS.

HE COULDN'T PULL THE TRIGGER BECAUSE I WAS TOO *BEAUTIFUL TO DIE*.

I SPENT THE REST OF THE DAY FEELING DISGUSTED WITH MYSELF FOR LETTING SUCH A THOUGHT EVEN ENTER MY MIND.

LITTLE DID I KNOW IT WAS FAR FROM OVER.

HE HAD STOLEN MY NIGHTS...

...MY DAYS...

...AND MY SMILE.

NEXT...

...NEXT WOULD BE MY HEART.

I DECIDED TO AVOID HIM FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. SEE IF THAT WOULD HELP.

IT DIDN'T. FOR THE DURATION OF THOSE TWO WEEKS, I FOUND MYSELF **UNFOCUSED**, MY MIND WANDERING BACK TO THAT MOMENT AND THE SOUND OF HIS VOICE.



TO **ESCAPE** THOSE THOUGHTS, INSTEAD OF BEING PRODUCTIVE I TURNED TO THE TRIVIAL.



IN MY EXHAUSTED STATE I COMMITTED THE CARDINAL SIN OF THERAPY...I STOPPED **LISTENING**.



I GREW **CYNICAL**. MY SESSIONS WERE JUST EMPTY, USELESS RANTS FROM BOTH EGOMANIACS AND JUST PLAIN **MANIACS**.



AND IT ALL TASTES LIKE CHICKEN, YOU KNOW?



I RETREATED MORE AND MORE, JUST TUNING OUT...



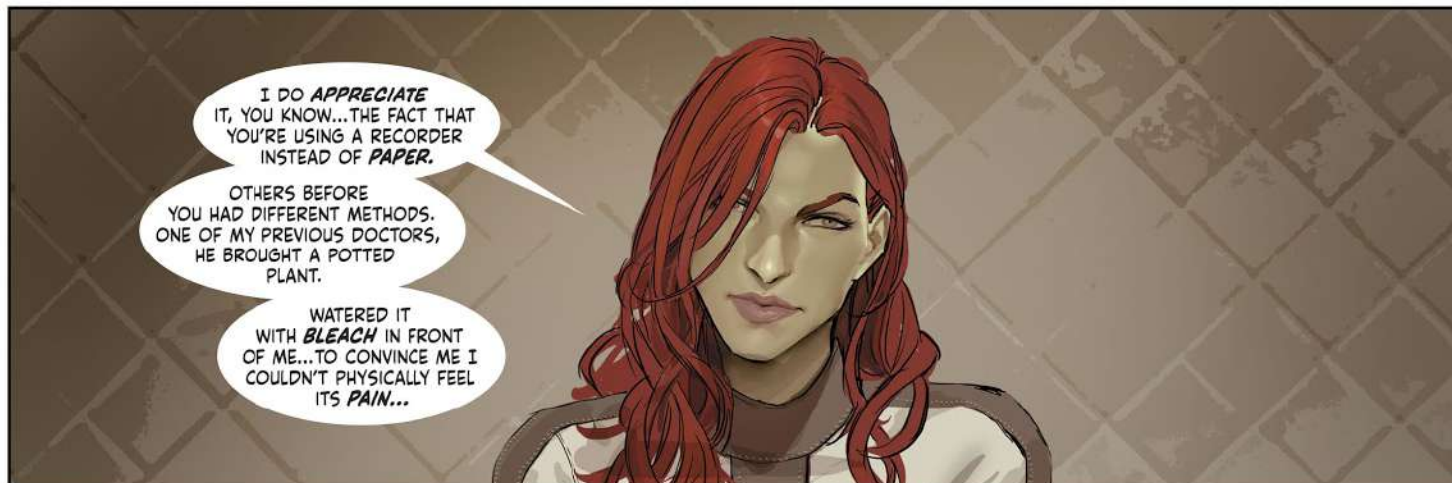
I QUESTIONED MY THEORY, MY IDEAS, MY WILL TO CONTINUE.



AND ALL THAT TIME, MY MIND JUST KEPT GOING BACK TO HIM...



"NO JOKE...I'D LOVE TO SEE YOU SMILE ONE DAY..."



I DO APPRECIATE IT, YOU KNOW...THE FACT THAT YOU'RE USING A RECORDER INSTEAD OF *PAPER*.

OTHERS BEFORE YOU HAD DIFFERENT METHODS. ONE OF MY PREVIOUS DOCTORS, HE BROUGHT A POTTED PLANT.

WATERED IT WITH *BLEACH* IN FRONT OF ME...TO CONVINCE ME I COULDN'T PHYSICALLY FEEL ITS *PAIN*...



RIGHT.

I DIDN'T USE THE RECORDER *FOR HER*... TRUTH WAS, BY THEN I WAS AT SUCH A LOW POINT THAT I COULDN'T BE *BOTHERED* TAKING NOTES ANYMORE.

HE MADE A *GRAVE* MISTAKE BY LETTING ME TOUCH THE SOIL OF THAT PLANT...

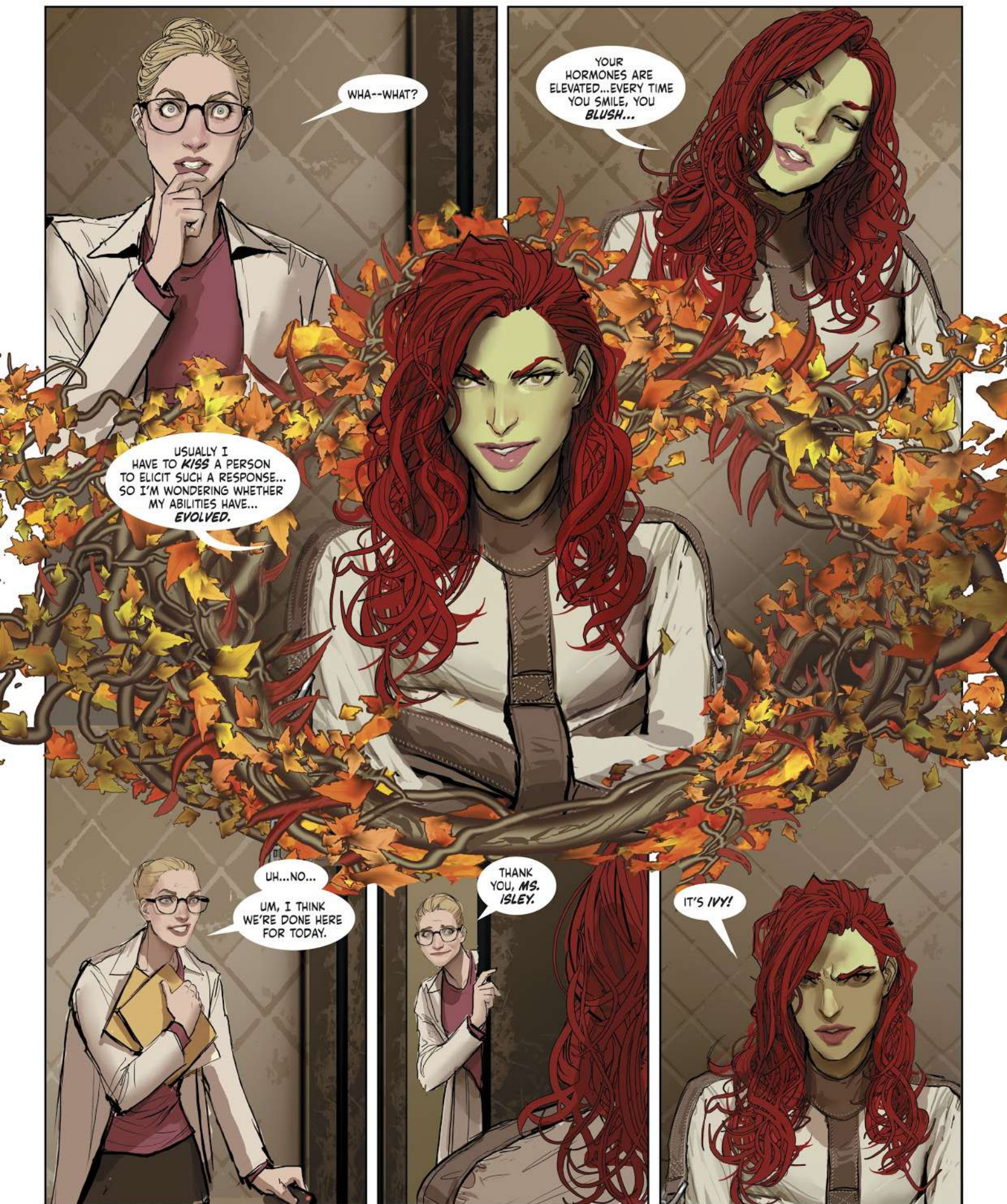


...
DOCTOR!

OH, SORRY, WHAT?



IS IT ME?



WHA--WHAT?

YOUR
HORMONES ARE
ELEVATED...EVERY TIME
YOU SMILE, YOU
BLUSH...

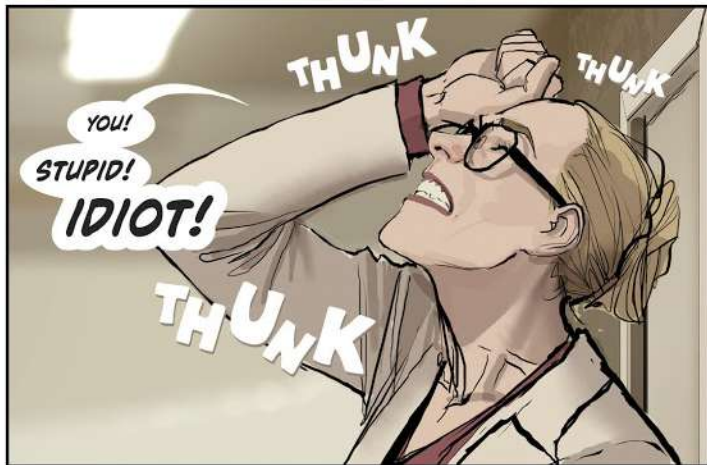
USUALLY I
HAVE TO *KISS* A PERSON
TO ELICIT SUCH A RESPONSE...
SO I'M WONDERING WHETHER
MY ABILITIES HAVE...
EVOLVED.

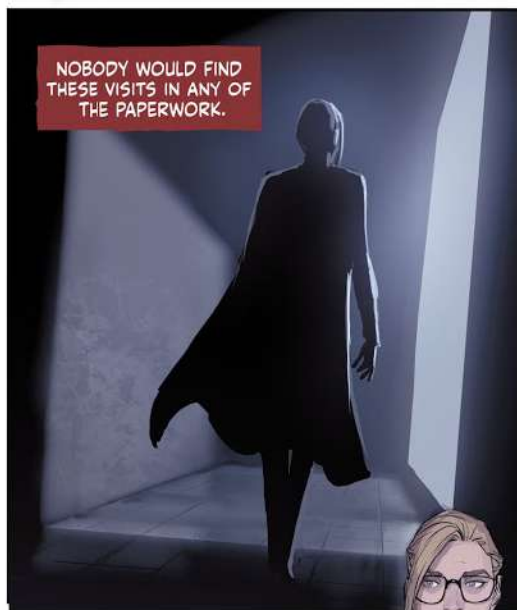
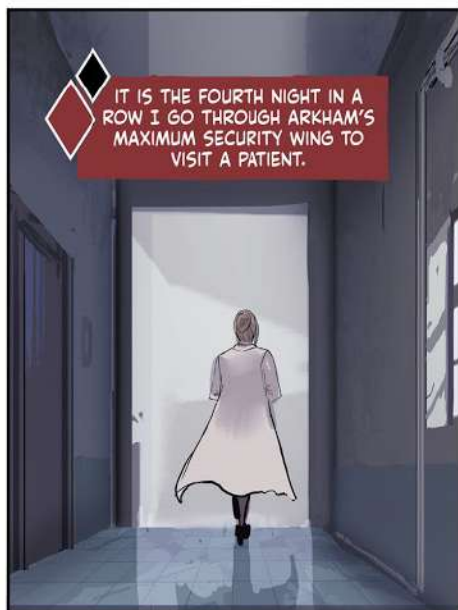
UH...NO...

UM, I THINK
WE'RE DONE HERE
FOR TODAY.

THANK
YOU, *MS.*
ISLEY.

IT'S *IVY!*







AS I WATCH HIM SLEEP, I START TO *RELAX*.
A SHADOW OF A SMILE SNEAKS UP ON MY FACE.

SLEEPING LIKE THAT, HE SEEMS
JUST LIKE A REGULAR PERSON...

PALE NIGHT LIGHT WASHES OUT THE
COLOR. IT REMOVES THE GREEN FROM
HIS HAIR AND MAKES HIS COMPLEXION
A MESMERIZING SIGHT.

ALMOST...*BEAUTIFUL*.



THIS IS MY OWN *SECRET THERAPY*.
A WAY TO BEAT THE FEAR.



THERE'S A TRICK PEOPLE USE
TO GET OVER THE FEAR OF
PUBLIC SPEAKING.

YOU IMAGINE THE
AUDIENCE *NAKED*...

WELL, SINCE MY IMAGINATION WAS
DARK AND FULL OF NIGHTMARES,
THIS WAS THE NEXT BEST THING.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT? IN THAT
WAY, IT KIND OF WORKED. HE
WASN'T SCARY.

NO...



NOT SCARY...

...JUST...

...SCARRED.

AS I WATCHED ONE SCARRED MAN SLEEP, SOMEWHERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF GOTHAM, IN ANOTHER KIND OF HOSPITAL, ANOTHER SCARRED MAN WAS, I WOULD LATER LEARN, JUST *WAKING UP*.

WH...

NGH...
WHAT...

WHAT'S
WRONG WITH
MY EYE?

CALM DOWN,
MR. DENT! WE'LL
COVER IT RIGHT
NOW.

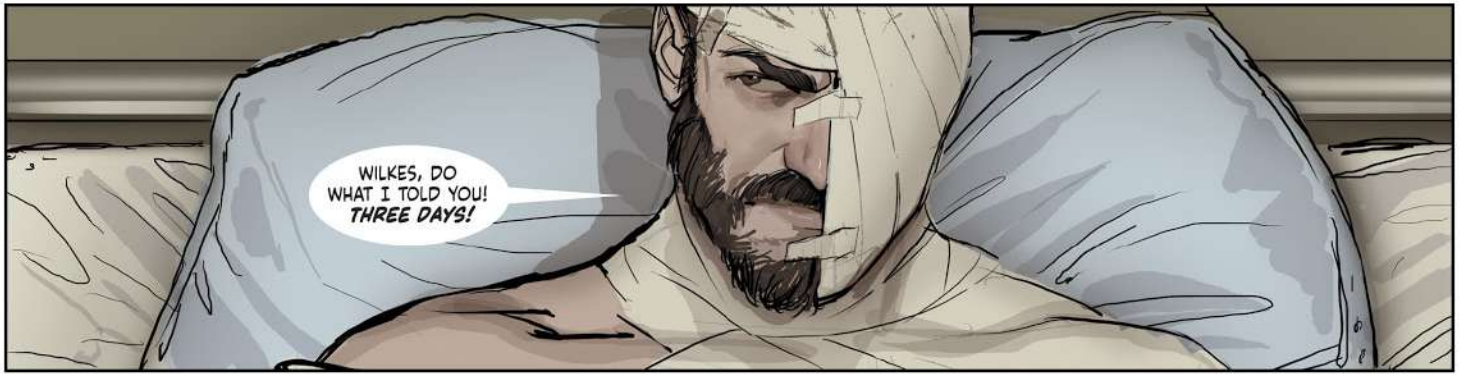
JUST RELAX!

WUH-
WHERE
AM I?

GOTHAM GENERAL.
YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH
A ROUGH FEW WEEKS,
MR. DISTRICT
ATTORNEY...








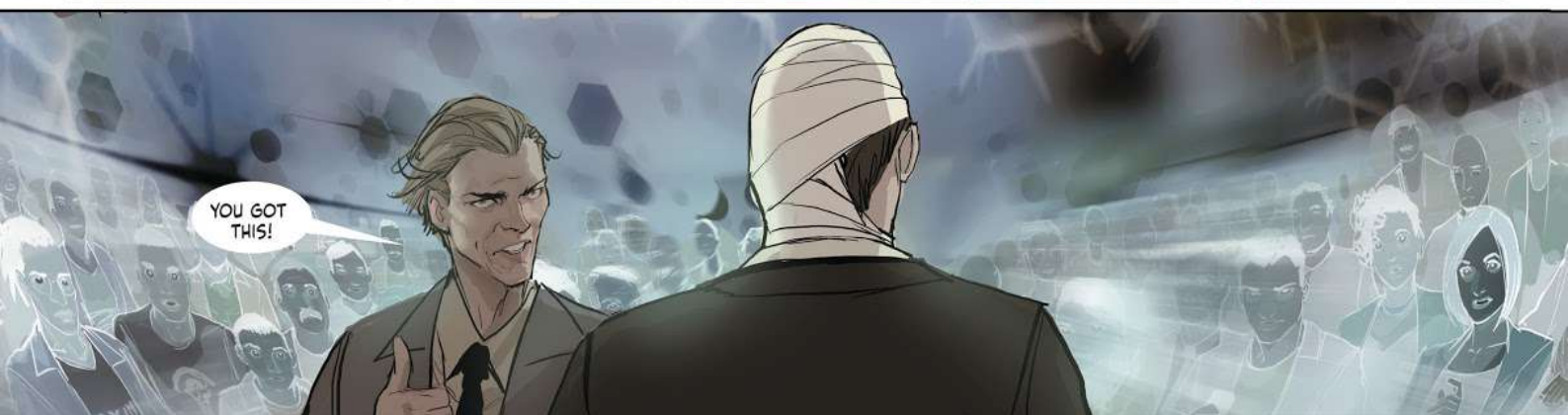
Salvatore "Sal" Maroni Executed

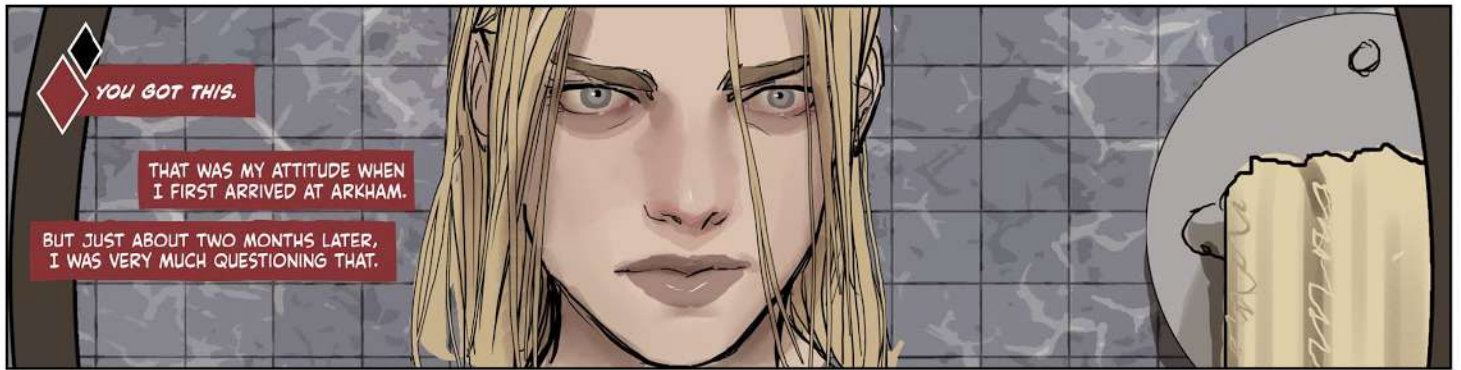
Following the attack on district attorney Harvey Dent, notorious construction mogul and suspected crime boss Salvatore Maroni met his end by the hand of the so-called Executioners. The vehicle transporting Mr. Maroni to the county jail was commandeered by the Executioners not long after its departure and from there on nobody knew of its whereabouts.

The autopsy concluded that Mr. Maroni was savagely beaten for an extended period of time resulting in as many as seventeen broken bones and was televised after a tape was taken of his execution.





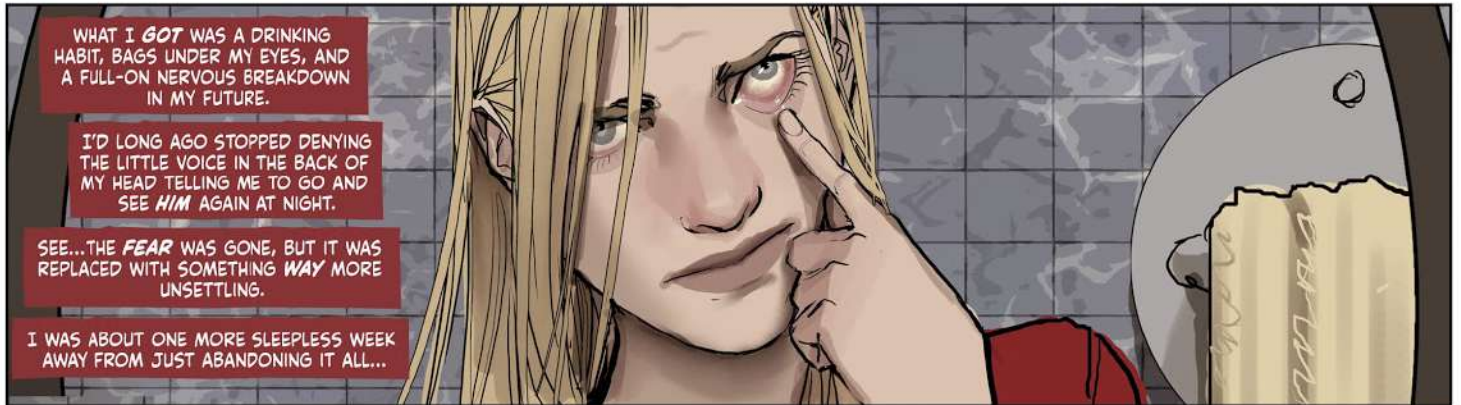




YOU GOT THIS.

THAT WAS MY ATTITUDE WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED AT ARKHAM.

BUT JUST ABOUT TWO MONTHS LATER, I WAS VERY MUCH QUESTIONING THAT.



WHAT I *GOT* WAS A DRINKING HABIT, BAGS UNDER MY EYES, AND A FULL-ON NERVOUS BREAKDOWN IN MY FUTURE.

I'D LONG AGO STOPPED DENYING THE LITTLE VOICE IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD TELLING ME TO GO AND SEE *HIM* AGAIN AT NIGHT.

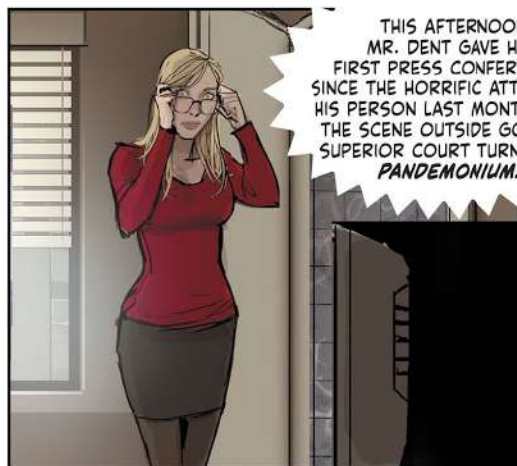
SEE...THE **FEAR** WAS GONE, BUT IT WAS REPLACED WITH SOMETHING **WAY** MORE UNSETTLING.

I WAS ABOUT ONE MORE SLEEPLESS WEEK AWAY FROM JUST ABANDONING IT ALL...



WHY DIDN'T I? WELL, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT WAS ONCE AGAIN BECAUSE OF...

GOTHAM'S D.A. HARVEY DENT IS ONCE AGAIN THE TOPIC OF THE DAY!



THIS AFTERNOON MR. DENT GAVE HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE THE HORRIFIC ATTACK ON HIS PERSON LAST MONTH, AND THE SCENE OUTSIDE GOTHAM SUPERIOR COURT TURNED TO **PANDEMONIUM.**

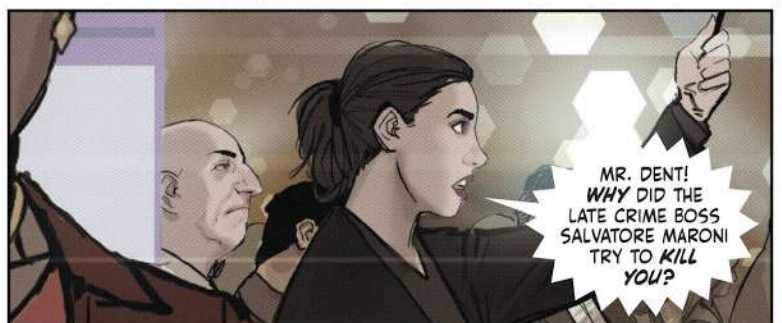


WE WILL NOW SHOW YOU THE RECORDING OF THIS EVENT.

BUT BE **WARNED:** YOU'LL WANT TO KEEP YOUR CHILDREN AWAY FROM THE TV FOR THE NEXT FEW MINUTES.



THIS **WILL** BE UNCOMFORT-ABLE TO WATCH.

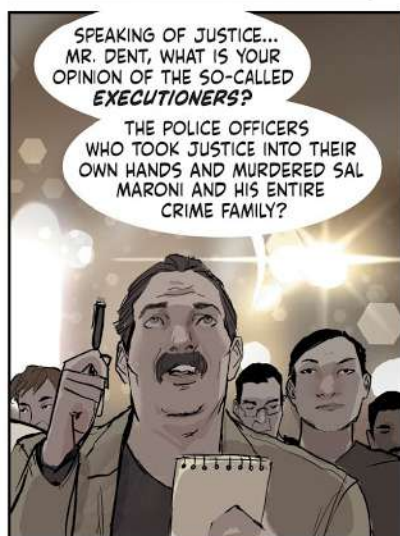


MR. DENT! **WHY** DID THE LATE CRIME BOSS SALVATORE MARONI TRY TO **KILL YOU?**



SAL MARONI INITIALLY APPROACHED ME AS A BUSINESSMAN WANTING TO SUPPORT MY CAMPAIGN FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY. I ACCEPTED HIS HELP.

HE SEEMED SINCERE, AND I HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT HIS INTENTIONS.





I AM A
GOD-FEARING MAN
BUT IF WE KEEP TURNING
THE OTHER CHEEK WE'LL
RUN OUT OF CHEEKS!

THE EXECUTIONERS
CRUSHED THOSE ROACHES
THE WAY FECKLESS
POLITICIANS NEVER
COULD!

THE WAY
THAT NOT EVEN
THE BATMAN
COULD!

AND EVEN
THOUGH NONE OF
YOU WILL ADMIT IT,
YOU **KNOW** I'M
RIGHT!

THERE IS
A **CANCER** IN
GOTHAM, AND THE
ONLY WAY TO CURE
IT IS BY **CARRYING**
IT OUT!



THERE IS NO
RECOVERY AND NO
REHABILITATION FOR
THESE PREDATORS!
DO YOU
HONESTLY THINK
THEY CAN
CHANGE?
ARE YOU THAT
DELUSIONAL?

KILLER CROC?
FREEZE? POISON
IVY? JOKER?
YOU
REALLY THINK
THEY CAN BE
HELPED?

THEY ARE
REMORSELESS,
COLD,
UNCARING...

MONSTERS.



WE HAVE TO STOP
HERE, AS MR. DENT'S SPEECH
DEVOLVES INTO A **TORRENT**
OF **PROFANITY** AIMED
AT THE CITY COUNCIL.



CITY HALL SUBSEQUENTLY
ISSUED A STATEMENT SAYING HARVEY DENT
HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY REMOVED FROM THE
OFFICE OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY, CITING
"STRONG PAIN MEDICATION" AS THE CAUSE
OF HIS STUNNING OUTBURST--



SIGH

A MONTH AGO I WOULD HAVE BEEN OUTRAGED.
I WOULD HAVE YELLED AT THE TELEVISION, FOR
ALL THE GOOD THAT WOULD HAVE DONE.
BUT NOT THAT DAY.

THAT DAY I WAS **TIRED**. TIRED ENOUGH TO
STOP CARING. TIRED ENOUGH FOR DENT'S
SERMON OF FEAR TO MAKE **SENSE** TO ME.

TIRED OF...EVERYTHING.



TIED OF ARKHAM.

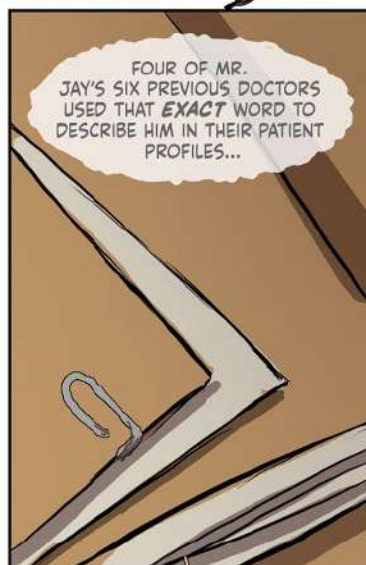
TIED OF HIM.

MY GREAT TORMENTOR.
WHY WOULD I EVER WANT
TO DEAL WITH HIM AGAIN?

WHAT WAS IT DENT CALLED HIM?
REMORSELESS, COLD, UNCARING...



UNCARING...



FOUR OF MR.
JAY'S SIX PREVIOUS DOCTORS
USED THAT *EXACT* WORD TO
DESCRIBE HIM IN THEIR PATIENT
PROFILES...



ALL SIX OF
THEM CLAIM HE'S
INCAPABLE OF FEELING
REAL EMOTIONS.



BUT...
THAT'S NOT
TRUE.



AND WHAT
DO *YOU* DREAM
OF?

I'VE *SEEN* IT.
SURE, IT HAPPENED RARELY,
BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN HIS
MASK WOULD *SLIP* FOR
A MOMENT...



OH...SIMPLE
STUFF...HONEST
SMILES...



IN EVERY ONE
OF THOSE INSTANCES,
HIS VOICE WOULD LOSE
ITS *EDGE*, THAT RASPY
TONE REPLACED BY
SOMETHING...
SOFTER.
SOMETHING ALMOST
MELANCHOLIC.



WELL...
I GUESS THAT
MAKES ME FEEL A
LITTLE LESS CRAZY,
THEN.

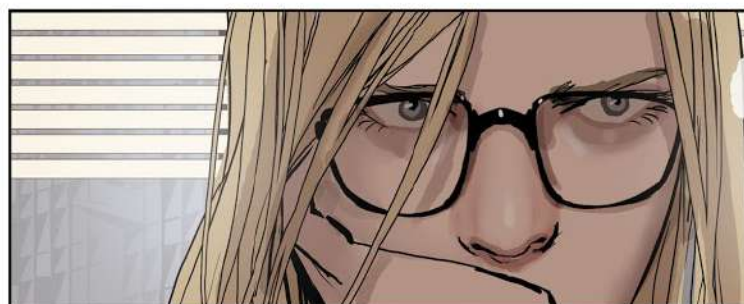
I THINK
THAT WILL BE ALL
FOR TODAY.



SOMETHING WARM...HONEST.



WAIT...



THAT MEANS HE **TRICKED** SIX DIFFERENT PSYCHIATRISTS INTO BELIEVING HE WAS THAT **FAR GONE**.

EITHER HE'S **THAT** GOOD AT LYING, OR THEY WERE **THAT** FOOLISH, OR...

OR THEY DIDN'T EVEN CARE!



IS THAT WHAT **HUGO STRANGE** MEANT?

IN ALL HONESTY, I THINK YOURS IS JUST ONE OF MANY **CRACKPOT** THEORIES I'VE SEEN IDEALISTIC YOUNG PSYCHIATRISTS BRING TO THE TABLE LOOKING FOR THE **HOWS** AND **WHYS** OF OUR... RESIDENTS.



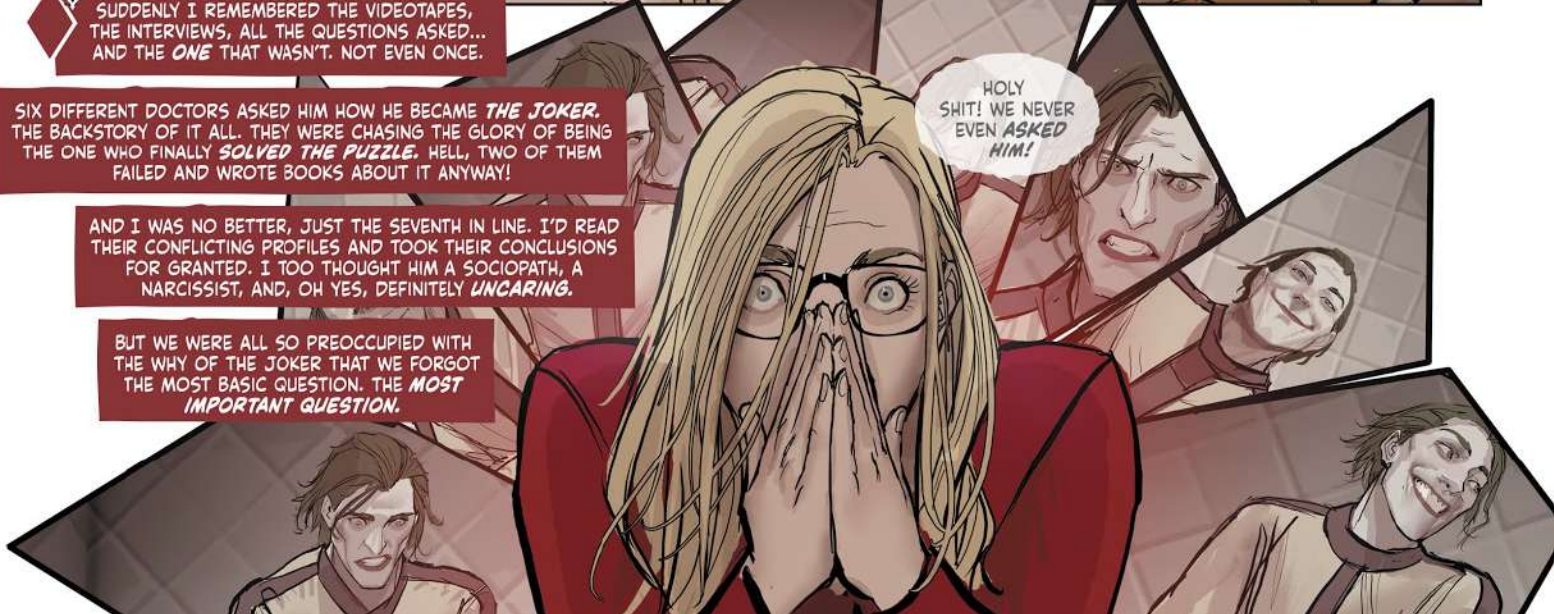
SUDDENLY I REMEMBERED THE VIDEOTAPES, THE INTERVIEWS, ALL THE QUESTIONS ASKED... AND THE **ONE** THAT WASN'T. NOT EVEN ONCE.

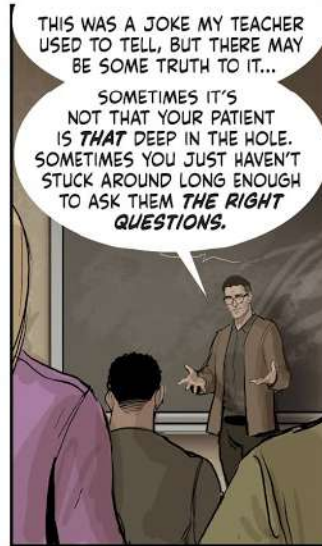
SIX DIFFERENT DOCTORS ASKED HIM HOW HE BECAME **THE JOKER**. THE BACKSTORY OF IT ALL. THEY WERE CHASING THE GLORY OF BEING THE ONE WHO FINALLY **SOLVED THE PUZZLE**. HELL, TWO OF THEM FAILED AND WROTE BOOKS ABOUT IT ANYWAY!

AND I WAS NO BETTER, JUST THE SEVENTH IN LINE. I'D READ THEIR CONFLICTING PROFILES AND TOOK THEIR CONCLUSIONS FOR GRANTED. I TOO THOUGHT HIM A SOCIOPATH, A NARCISSIST, AND, OH YES, DEFINITELY **UNCARING**.

BUT WE WERE ALL SO PREOCCUPIED WITH THE WHY OF THE JOKER THAT WE FORGOT THE MOST BASIC QUESTION. THE **MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION**.

HOLY SHIT! WE NEVER EVEN **ASKED HIM!**







I AM FINE,
MR. JAY.

NOW. I HAVE
JUST **ONE QUESTION**
FOR YOU.



ALL RIGHT...SHOOT,
DOC!
WHAT DO
YOU WANT
TO KNOW?



DO YOU EVER
FEEL REMORSE FOR
THE LIVES YOU'VE
TAKEN?



REALLY?

COME ON,
DOC.

YOU'VE
READ MY FILES.
"A NARCISSISTIC
SOCIOPATH."

"A HEARTLESS
PSYCHOPATH."

"A CLASSIC CASE
OF AN ANTISOCIAL"
SOMETHING-OR-
OTHER...



YES. I'VE READ YOUR FILES AND
I'VE SEEN THE VIDEO INTERVIEWS,
AND I NOTICED THAT NOBODY
EVER BOTHERED ASKING YOU
THAT QUESTION.



AND GIVEN THE...
CONFLICTING NATURE OF
YOUR PAST DIAGNOSES, IT'S
A QUESTION THAT **NEEDS**
ANSWERING.



NOW, MAYBE **MY**
PREDECESSORS JUST
ASSUMED YOUR ANSWER
WAS NO, I CAN'T SAY
FOR SURE.



ME, PERSONALLY?
I'D RATHER HEAR IT
DIRECTLY FROM
YOU.



FOR
THE FIRST ONES...
THERE WAS STILL
THAT.

I GUESS THE
FIRST VICTIM OF THE
STREETS OF GOTHAM IS
ONE'S **EMPATHY.**



W-WHAT?

I REMEMBER ENTERING THE ROOM THAT DAY, FEELING ON TOP OF THE WORLD. NO GLASS, NO NOTHING. I WAS READY FOR A FACE TO FACE.

I HAD MY LITTLE ICEBREAKER QUESTION. IT WAS A PLANNED MOVE. SHOW HIM SOMETHING HE WASN'T USED TO.

CATCH HIM OFF GUARD.

BUT INSTEAD HIS ANSWER DID THE SAME TO ME. ANY PRETENSE OF MY EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT WAS IN PIECES.



AND I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EARS.

I MEAN...REGRET, GUILT...EMPATHY...THEY BRING ABOUT HESITATION.

AND ON THE STREETS, HESITATION WILL GET YOU CAUGHT...GET YOU **KILLED**.

I ALWAYS FIGURED, WE KILLED **THAT** PART OF OURSELVES FIRST.



I HAD TO PLAY THIS CAREFULLY.



KILL THE ATTACHMENTS.



I HAD TO PLAY IT SMART.





IN HINDSIGHT I PLAYED IT NEITHER SMART NOR CAREFULLY. INSTEAD I JUST *TOOK THE BAIT*.

HOW DID IT START, MR. JAY?

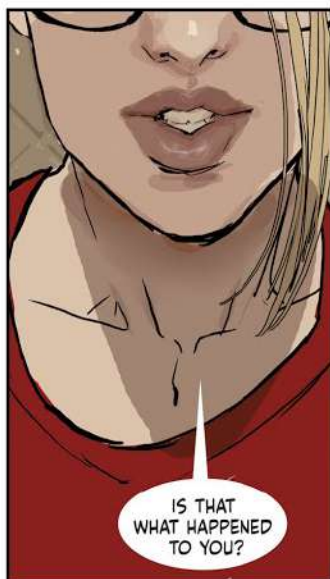
MY, GRANDMA...WHAT *FASCINATING MENTAL ISSUES* YOU HAVE.

THE BETTER TO *DRAW YOU NEAR*, MY DARLING.

HOW DOES ONE GO ABOUT KILLING THEIR ATTACHMENTS...

YOU GET THAT ONE BAD MOMENT WHEN THE BURDEN OF THEM BECOMES TOO MUCH...

WHEN YOU LOSE IT ALL...



IS THAT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?



IT DOESN'T MATTER ANY-MORE.



IT DOES TO ME.



OKAY...HOW ABOUT YOU ANSWER ONE OF *MY* QUESTIONS FIRST?



FINE.



HOW OFTEN
DO YOU WATCH ME
SLEEP?

I DON'T EVEN KNOW
HOW TO DESCRIBE IT...

IT'S AS IF, WHEN I JOURNEYED INTO
HIS HEAD, I LEFT A TRAIL BEHIND...

A TRAIL HE *FOLLOWED*.

I WAS LOOKING FOR THE BIG BAD
WOLF...AND NOW THERE HE WAS, HUFFING
AND PUFFING AT THE DOORS OF MY MIND.

AND *GOD HELP ME*, A SMALL, FUCKED-
UP PART OF ME WANTED TO LET HIM IN.

IT WAS INSANE. I HAD SPOKEN TO HIM
ONLY FOUR TIMES. THE FIRST TIME,
HE HELD ME AT GUNPOINT.

HE GAVE ME MONTHS
OF NIGHTMARES.

AND...HE WANTED
TO SEE ME *SMILE*.

AND THAT WAS IT. HE NEEDED ME. THIS
SCARRED, BROKEN MAN NEEDED *ME*...
AND I WANTED TO BE THERE FOR HIM.

I WANTED TO
SMILE FOR HIM...

I NEEDED TO...



HOW OFTEN
DO YOU WATCH ME
SLEEP?

I DON'T EVEN KNOW
HOW TO DESCRIBE IT...

IT'S AS IF, WHEN I JOURNEYED INTO
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SCARRED, BROKEN MAN NEEDED *ME*...
AND I WANTED TO BE THERE FOR HIM.

I WANTED TO
SMILE FOR HIM...

I NEEDED TO...

...SNAP OUT OF IT AND ASSUME **CONTROL** OVER THIS RUNAWAY TRAIN OF A SITUATION.

UH. IT WAS JUST THE **ONE TIME!** I WAS...PASSING BY AND I NOTICED YOUR SCARS...

IS THAT **PITY** I HEAR IN YOUR VOICE?

NO
NEED FOR THAT,
DOCTOR.

THEY ARE
BATTLE SCARS,
NOTHING MORE.

AND
ANYWAYS, I
BARELY FEEL
ANY PAIN.

MY PROFESSOR ONCE SAID A
PSYCHIATRIST IS AN
ARCHEOLOGIST OF THE MIND.

YOU GENTLY REMOVE LAYERS OF
DEFENSIVENESS, DENIAL, RESENTMENT,
AND SHAME. ONE QUESTION AT A TIME.

YOU DON'T PUSH THEM.

LIKE AN ARCHEOLOGIST, YOU GO
IN CAREFULLY WITH A SOFT BRUSH
AND A TENDER TOUCH.

BUT THAT DAY I FORGOT MY
BRUSH AND WENT STRAIGHT
FOR THE **HAMMER**.

I'M **NOT**
LETTING THIS
GO!
I NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT
YOUR **LOSS!**

WHY?

BECAUSE...
I WANT TO
HELP...

OH, **STOP**
IT, DOCTOR!

TELL ME, AND
HONESTLY!

WHY ARE YOU **HERE?**
SEE, I'LL GIVE YOU THIS:
YOU GOT ME TO TELL YOU MORE
ABOUT MYSELF THAN ANYONE
ELSE **EVER** DID. AND WHO
KNOWS, MAYBE IT'S
MY FAULT.

MAYBE I WAS
DWELLING TOO MUCH
ON WHY I WANTED TO SEE
YOU SMILE. MAYBE THAT'S
WHY I LET YOU IN...BUT IN
THE END, NONE OF IT
MATTERS.



SEE, I MAY BE
A LITTLE **CRAZY**, BUT
I'M NOT **STUPID**.

YOU MAY HIDE
IT BETTER THAN OTHERS,
BUT LIKE THEM YOU'RE HERE
HOPING TO WRITE A **BOOK**
OR AN **ARTICLE** OR A
THESIS...

IN THE END
AT LEAST THE COPS
ARE **HONEST**.

THEY SEE
US AS MONSTERS
BECAUSE WE ARE
JUST THAT!



NO!
IT'S
NOT... I'M
NOT LIKE
THAT!



I...



HE SAID IT IN OUR VERY
FIRST MEETING.

NORMAL PEOPLE DREAM
OF GOING CRAZY.

PROBLEM IS, SOMETIMES
THERE'S NO COMING BACK.



AND YOU KNOW WHAT? *THIS*
CERTAINLY QUALIFIED AS CRAZY.

IT WAS AN ADRENALINE-FUELED
MOVE OF DESPERATION.

AND IN THAT MOMENT I ALLOWED
THE THOUGHT I HAD BEEN RUNNING
AWAY FROM TO FINALLY TAKE SHAPE.

A TERRIFYING AND
DARKLY ALLURING IMAGE
THAT PLAGUED MY MIND.



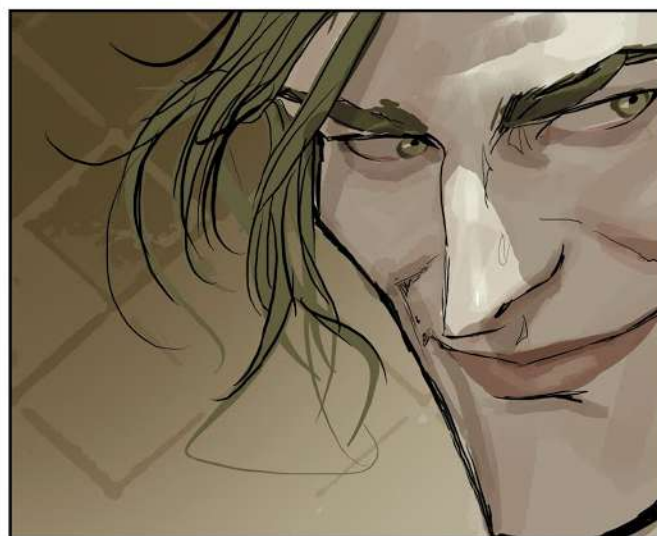
MAYBE THERE WAS ANOTHER REASON
THOSE OTHER PSYCHIATRISTS COULDN'T
GET A GENUINE EMOTION OUT OF HIM...



MAYBE THE ANSWER WAS
STARING ME IN THE FACE.

MAYBE, JUST MAYBE SOMEWHERE
IN MY REPRESSED HEART I KNEW
IT AND FEARED IT BECAUSE...

BECAUSE, GOD HELP ME,
I MIGHT SMILE BACK AT HIM...



BUT I WASN'T SMILING, NOT YET.

NO, IN THAT MOMENT I WAS TOO AWARE THAT IF THIS RISK DIDN'T PAY OFF, HE MIGHT DO *BY HAND* WHAT HE'D REFUSED TO DO *BY GUN*.

IT'S TRUE.
I CAME HERE FOR MY
OWN PURPOSE...

BUT...THAT
CHANGED. I CHANGED.
I FOUND MYSELF CARING
ABOUT YOU...

THEN AND THERE, I PLAYED
A GAME FOR KEEPS.

CARING
SO MUCH THAT IT
SCARES ME.

AN OLD GAME.

YOU...
SCARE
ME. AND
YET...

YOU KNOW THE ONE...
HE LOVES ME...

HE LOVES ME NOT...

THANK
YOU, DR.
QUINN.



THANK YOU
FOR CARING.

HARLEY...
YOU
CAN CALL ME
HARLEY...

HARLEY...QUINN.

HEH...

I LIKE THAT...

I HAD A DREAM THAT NIGHT.

I DREAMED OF A LONG,
WINDING ROAD, OF BATS,
AND OF A GIANT BEAST.

I DREAMED OF A BROKEN MAN...

AND IN THE DREAM, I SMILED.

END OF CHAPTER TWO.



**"THERE WAS
A BROKEN MAN
IN THE ABYSS..."**

**"...I REACHED DOWN
TO HELP HIM..."**

**"...I REALIZED
TOO LATE,
HE WASN'T SLIPPING..."**

**"...HE WAS
DRAGGING ME..."**



HARLEEN

BOOK THREE - IN STORES NOVEMBER



**BLACK
LABEL**

HARLEEN

ANDY KHOURI

EDITOR

MAGGIE HOWELL

ASSISTANT EDITOR

DARRAN ROBINSON

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**“HEAVEN
HELP ME...”**



**“A SMALL PART
OF ME...”**



**“...WANTS
TO LET
HIM IN.”**

A BRILLIANT YOUNG PSYCHIATRIST WITH THE CURE FOR THE MADNESS OF GOTHAM, DR. HARLEEN QUINZEL, TAKES DRASTIC MEASURES TO SAVE THE CITY FROM ITSELF. WITNESS THE BIRTH OF THE LEGENDARY SUPER-VILLAIN HARLEY QUINN IN THIS STUNNING REIMAGINING OF HARLEY AND THE JOKER'S TWISTED AND TRAGIC LOVE AFFAIR BY ACCLAIMED STORYTELLER STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ (*AQUAMAN: UNDERWORLD, SUNSTONE*).

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